1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria



764 the village of Nugur, with the cromlech in front of the two large *kanal-gutta* posts and behind them two of the small corner *kanal-gutta* posts and the log- and leaf-piled grave. At a cremation-grave seen at Handawada, where the ashes of the pyre were still fresh, there was no *kanal-gutta* or cromlech, and the only offering to the dead visible was a small basket that contained the funerary grain, fixed at the top of the fence erected round the grave. The usual strips of cloth were hung from the boughs of trees overhead. The wicker-work frames of dancing shields were also suspended from the fence, although, as related on page 76 above, the use of these dancing shields has for the time been abandoned. The Nugur photograph on Plate XX shows dancing head-dresses on top of the two large *kanal-gutta* posts, a large imitation spear of bamboo between them, and strips of cloth hanging from long bamboo saplings planted in the ground, as there were no reasonably low overhanging boughs. The two upper photographs on the plate show women mourners around a sheeted body in a house at Handawada, and keeners outside a house at Bhera Tondawada at noon before a funeral.

Immediately after the actual funeral in many parts of the hills all the mourners proceed from the funeral ground to a spot by the side of one of the paths entering the village. There the *erramtogh* or the next nearest affine relative present builds a small cairn from 1½ to 2½ feet high, surmounted by a flat cap-stone; the cairn is known as a *marma-kal* or *marman-gal*. On the cap-stone he and each of the householders present places a pinch of rice or *kuthi* grain, addresses the dead man by name, and tells him that he gives him this food to eat. All then go home. In the Tapalibhum, Behramar and Sonpur Mar *parganas* the dead man's heir or *jiya-bital* sets up this cairn on the path a little way from the burial or cremation ground. At the selected spot he clears the ground, places a little grain on it, and makes a small chicken peck at the grain; he then cuts its throat behind his back with a knife, the *erramtogh* or some other near affine places a large flat stone at the side of the dead chicken, and the heir piles stones over it. No words are uttered while this is done. Here they call the cairn *korq-kotikana-kal*, or 'chicken-feeding stone', and do not know the term *marma-kal*. In the Farsal, Bardal, Tulagotal, Hukkagotal and Farsigotal *parganas* they apply the term *marma-kal* to a small stone set up by the side of the path leading from the village to the *kotokal* row of menhirs for the dead as a temporary consolation for the departed when the heir has not sufficient grain or money to erect a menhir immediately after the funeral.

765 Mourning is observed for four days after the funeral, and it is taboo for the heir and the men of the deceased's family to go to

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
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765 work in this period. Often a house or a portion of a house in which a death has occurred is shut up and not re-occupied. It is, however, not repaired. So long as it stands, it is regarded as a memorial of the dead. On the day after the funeral, if the house is still to be occupied, the rooms and the surroundings are cleaned out, and the floors are re-plastered. On the first three mornings after the [769] funeral they place a little meal from the Pot of the Departed on the grave as an offering. At the end of the period of mourning 764 the heir, if rich enough, should proceed at once to set up a menhir to the dead in the *kotokal*, in the *parganas* and villages where these menhirs are still erected. If, however, he cannot yet afford to do so, he goes to the graveside, bows before the *hanal-garya* cromlech, tells the dead man's *hanal* that he is sorry that he cannot yet afford to erect his stone, and begs him to be patient, to forgive him for the delay and not to harass him. It may take him two or three years to collect the necessary grain and money for feeding those who are to help him to find and erect a suitable menhir. In many parts of the hills the custom has fallen into disuse, because of its cost. But it is still common on the Kutru side of the hills, in Tulagotal, Hukkagotal, Farsigotal, Farsal, Bardal, Tapalibhum, Padalibhum, Nurbhum, Behramar and Sonpur *parganas*, and also prevails in Dugal and other neighbouring Jhoria Muria *parganas*. In Chhota Dongar *pargana* few clans now erect either *marma-kal* or *kotokal* stones, though in many villages old rows of *kotokal* menhirs attest the former prevalence of the practice; the Bokalur are almost the only clan there who still erect them. From Adeq in that *pargana* rows of menhirs will be met by the traveller at Itulnar in Bhairamgarh Mar, between Itulnar and Hikul in Barsur Mar, and at Toinar and other villages in the latter *pargana*; but the clans now occupying these areas do not erect menhirs, and say that the rows still standing were erected ages ago by clans no longer known, though the Gumelor attribute the menhirs in their village of Toinar to the long extinct Timor clan. The Tamor of Tumirgunda between Handawada and the Indrawati have a *kotokal* on the hill path to Hirameta, but have erected no new menhir there for years, and say that nowadays no stone is set up till three generations have elapsed after death; they admit that this is practically a confession that the practice has been abandoned, and say that it was found to be too expensive.

When, however, the heir has enough grain and money to pay for the food and drink needed for the erection of a menhir, whether on the fourth day after death, or after the lapse of some months or years, he calls together his relatives and friends, and all go off into the forest to look for a suitable stone. The only consideration

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria



sometimes grows properly and sometimes fails, so a child may die or rust or wither for lack of rain and so die in the womb.'

The Muria do not hide the facts of death from their children or restrain them from witnessing the gloomy rites by which they dispose of their dead. Indeed, as at marriages, chelik and motiari have their special duties at a funeral. The chelik generally carry the corpse out to the place of disposal; the motiari accompany them there and afterwards make leaf-plates and cups for the funeral feast. If a pregnant woman or a mother with a very young baby dies, only the chelik may take the body out beyond a stream and dispose of it.

All over India it is believed that those who die unmarried turn into unsatisfied and petulant demons. They have been frustrated in obtaining the loveliest things in life and for all time they are miserable. It is curious that it is not usually virginity but the fact that the dead boy or girl has not passed through the marriage ceremony that matters. A married boy who has not consummated the marriage is said to live in some saja tree on his property to protect it. Women may go near, but not menstruous or pregnant women or their husbands. The Muria take special precautions when a chelik or motiari dies. The Gaita drives nails into the four corners of the grave and the ghotul members make a special offering to the ghost begging it not to trouble them. In some villages it is believed that the ghost of a motiari lives under a mahua tree and the cooking for the funeral feast therefore is done in its shade. In Padbera, the Muria believe that when a motiari dies she becomes a Mirchuk and lives in a pipal tree, and a chelik becomes a Matia and lives in a banyan. The usual Gondi word for the ghost of a motiari is Nelang-jural; occasionally she occupies an old ant-hill. Very young children live in a banyan and drink its milky sap. In Bakulwahi twelve years ago a motiari died and the Gaita drove nails into the four corners of the ghotul building and went round it with the chelik in procession in order to protect it against ghostly invasion. They sacrificed a pig saying, 'Are you going to stay here, or will you go away?' When the pig ate the rice which was as usual offered to it the Muria understood that the motiari was ready to go away. They carried the pig to the boundary of the village and killed it there and thus freed the ghotul from any danger from the ghost of that girl. In Palari the Muria said that when a chelik was killed by a tiger he turned into a Baghmeri-bhut. When he died of ordinary illness he became a Kuara-bhut, revealing his presence in a whirlwind. When a very young chelik died he became an Arajatta-bhut and entered into people's stomachs, giving them a lot of pain. In Palnar the ghost of the chelik or motiari attacks whichever member of the ghotul is the first to get married after the death, presumably out of jealousy. When the Siraha diagnoses what is the matter he offers the usual sacrifices and, making a little man out of straw, asks the bhut to leave its victim and possess the straw-man instead. This is then carried to the boundary of the village and thrown away. Where a chelik or motiari has died in a village during the previous year, on the eve of any wedding the Gaita goes to a small date palm and ties it round and round with string saying, 'Go away from here, don't come near the boundary of our village'. He puts a large stone on the tree and the wedding can take place in safety. After the wedding he removes the stone, unties the string and offers an egg and chicken.

In Kabonga it was said that when a chelik or motiari died, the ghost became what they called an Uriya-bhut. But they said that there was nothing very dangerous about it. 'The Uriya-bhut plays and dances just like the chelik and motiari. In fun it throws leaves and dust into the air; it blows in people's

eyes; it throws down grass from the roof. But no one need ever be afraid of the ghost of a chelik or motiari.'

During the bazaar ceremonies in the east of the State (when these are performed for a dead chelik or motiari) the villagers say, 'Mahapurub sent you into this world only for a little while; he did not intend you to live with us for long; so don't be angry and don't trouble us'. The parents are led round the shops and then go home leaving the Uriya-bhut in the bazaar. The dead boy or girl is not mingled with the Departed as are the married, and no menhir is erected for them.

Sometimes the ghost of a chelik may be dangerous. In the compound of the Khutgaon ghotul there was formerly a great stone. One of the boys died and the ghost came to sit on it bringing an epidemic with him. Many boys and girls died and the ghotul had to be destroyed and rebuilt in another place. But the stone remained where it was and when the villagers tried to move it sickness broke out again and so they left it alone.

Many Muria say that when an unmarried girl dies her ghost is dangerous because if a witch can get hold of it, she gives it the form of a pretty girl and sends her to rob men of their seed. Such a girl may appear as a man's mother or sister and torment him.

A dead motiari may also continue to visit her old friends of the ghotul. This only happens, however, when the boys sleep outside, for it is believed that Lingo protects the actual building from the invasion of any witch or spirit. The Sirdarsingh of the Chargaon ghotul told me how he once had an encounter with such a ghost. 'She visited me and I went to her; for many days she was with me; I could not get rid of her. I often went to her and my clothes were spoilt with my discharges. At last I gave her a comb and necklace and she went away, but for fear she may return I sacrifice a pig every year.' So too motiari complain of visits from some old lover's ghost: 'he comes to us, pressing us'.

### III. The Soul and its Fate

The belief in immortality, or at least in some kind of survival after death, is bound up with the idea of the soul. The Muria theologians say explicitly that a man has two or even three souls (*jiwa*). In Bakulwahi the villagers said that after death one of these souls[1] went to Mahapurub, one became a Hanal and lived in the Pot of the Departed, and the third became a Chhaiya or Shade, a ghost that visited his relatives in dreams and often made himself a nuisance. The word Hanal, as Grigson has pointed out, is literally translated 'The Departed', for it is a past participial form of the Gondi verb *handâna*, to go.[2] Whenever I speak of the Departed, therefore, it may be taken as translating Hanal in original. In Randhna the people said that,

> Every man has two souls: one lives in his mouth and one in his body—you can feel it going *duk-duk* in the chest. The first soul goes from the mouth direct to Mahapurub; the other remains in the corpse and goes with the mourners to the grave. It watches the body being burnt or buried from a tree nearby, then goes to the nearest stream and lives there until the people come and catch it in the form of a fish and take it home. Then it lives in the house as a god (*deo*).

So also in Amgaon, the Jhoria Muria of the Abujhmar foothills said that,

> A man has two souls: one always remains with him; the other, a smaller one, leaves him in sleep and its adventures are what we call

[1] Throughout, when I use the word 'soul' it represents *jiwa* in the original.
[2] Grigson, op. cit., p. 223.